Forum: Special Conference on Education (SPC1)

Issue: Improving safe and quality education conditions in ongoing conflict regions with regards to the Sustainable Development Goal 4

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Introduction

"Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom"- George Washington

Education is a cornerstone for stability, peace and welfare. It develops nations, equips individuals with knowledge and experience and is the key essential to our society's development. Yet in various regions of the world where hostile environments are sheltered and immersed by political and financial conflicts, this basic and fundamental human right for citizens, especially children's, is oftentimes neglected, and has failed to sustain in difficult living conditions. In war-torn cities that were once streets that are filled with colours, memories and culture that are now nothing but ruins suffused with wasted potential, corners filled with the sound of the silent trauma of injured, displaced and scared children, with the absence of trained teachers in actively functioning institutions; education becomes a casualty, one that has more consequences of missing to do an assignment and has repercussions far beyond the classroom.

Our first agenda item of this committee, "Improving safe and quality education conditions in ongoing conflict regions with regards to the Sustainable Development Goal 4" demands to the nations of the world to address and take charge of one of the biggest challenges that underprivileged and marginalized communities face and suffer from this profound humanitarian and societal crisis. With the help of this

agenda we ask ourselves the important question of; How can we work on providing the right of education in ongoing conflict zones that are filled with chaos, fear, armed violence, instability and the fearing possibility of immediate death?

As adopted in 2015 by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by the date of 2030. Although aspiring ,these goals only remain idealistic and a far away target for those who live in ongoing conflict areas. Children in such regions are more than twice as likely to be out of school compared to their peers in other countries where such conditions are not a problem, and for those who are still enrolled as students their education remains unfulfilling and compromised by overcrowded classrooms.

This chair report aims to help delegates understand the concept thoroughly with the understanding of the scale and the complexity of this crisis. It will examine the definitions and frameworks related to the topic, explore historical and currently ongoing conflicts that have affected educational development. It will then analyze the effectiveness of already existing solutions and solution attempts related to the subject. Finally, it will suggest possible solutions that would benefit the improvement of this problem.

In doing so, this report's aim is not only to educate, it seeks to challenge delegates to learn the moral urgency and political complexity of the issue. Because when schools fall silent, when teachers flee, and when the blackboard becomes a memory, we don't just lose education; we lose hope, we lose peace, and we encourage a cycle of generational violence. Education in conflict areas is not a luxury. It is a lifeline, and ensuring its continuity must be treated as both a fundamental human right and a global security imperative.

Definition of Key Terms

Conflict Affected Areas

Areas that have or are experiencing conflict expanding but not limited to; political violence, political instability, armed forces, acts of terrorism, genocide, war and post war/conflict fragility. In these areas we observe the lack of public services such as but not limited to education, health care, governance and legal aid.

Safe and Quality Education

A concept that supports the physical and mental well being as well as the protection of children and the academic integrity of both teaching and learning in all settings.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)

One of the goals of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals which are aiming to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

Education in Emergencies (EIE)

In times of crisis, education is a lifeline to children and their families. It can help protect their physical and mental health, allow them to continue to learn and develop, and offer them a sense of normalcy and hope for a better future.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's)

People who are forced to flee their homes, due to conflict or disaster that remains within their own country. Often live in camps or informal settlements with limited access to quality education.

Refugees

People who forcely flee their homes due to conflict or dangerous living conditions that have happened in the past or are actively happening in their home countries.

Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs)

Groups that do not associate with any type of governmental bodies that engage in armed conflicts, which at times have threatened to and have used various types of violence and acts of terrorism to achieve their goals. Some of the NSAGs are organized as paramilitary groups, using similar methods and built to those of state armed forces. On the other hand, others may use violence such as but not limited to; kidnapping,usage of explosive devices and hacking into computer systems.

Attacks on Education

Any type of violence against students and educators regardless of their age, background, sexual orientation or religious belief. This act also includes the usage of schools as military bases and the kidnapping or the killing of students, teachers and school staff.

Safe Schools Declaration

A non-binding political commitment set in motion in 2015 to protect the lives and well being of students, teachers and institutions of education during times of armed conflict. Even though over 115 countries have agreed with the declaration, there hasn't been any implementations, remaining unpredictable.

Child Soldiers

Children under 18 (minors) hired or used by members by, such as but not limited to, armed forces, logistical support, groups for combat or exploitation. The recruitment of child soldiers usually happens in near school areas or schools in conflict zones.

Inclusive Education

A method of education that takes into consideration the every need of every student regardless of language barriers, ethnicity, physical disabilities, gender, sexual orientation or being a refugee/displacement status.

Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS)

Temporary learning facilities created to focus on and continue education in refugee settlements, camps and catastrophe areas. Although they usually lack complete necessary supplies they offer an essential sense of everyday life for children which unfortunately remains missing in times of conflict.

Distance Learning in Emergencies

Usage of different non-traditional ways of education such as radios, mobile apps, digitally shared materials or online platforms to continue daily education due to physical inaccessibility to schools. A well known and a widely adopted example would be the online/at home education students received during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Education

Violence that is targeted against a specific gender (statistics shows that 1 in 3 women experience violence and assault in educational settings), often occurring in or near in schools. Gender-based violence includes but not limited to; sexual assault, rape, harassment, physical violence, physological and emotional abuse, early and forced marriage; women in crisis and conflict areas are specifically affected by this condition.

Donor Fatigue

A decrease in the desire of internationally known donors to continue financial aid and funding to long lasting crises. It often leads to a decrease in total and a reduction in funding for education in ongoing conflict zones.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

A global United Nations (UN) fund that is dedicated to supporting education in times of emergencies and conflict. The fund prioritizes fast response, coordination and sustainable programming in settings of emergency conflicts and disasters.

INEE Minimum Standards

Frequently used in crisis education planning based on guidelines established and published by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) that aims to ensure quality and responsible forms of education during times of crises.

Resilient Education Systems

Systems that are capable of withstanding, adapting to and recovering from unexpected circumstances including pandemics, natural disasters, political conflicts and wars. Infrastructure, governance, policy and community involvement are all parts of resilience.

Background Information

Education; a fundamental human right in conflict affected zones

Multiple international frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) and the UNiversal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), identify and accept education as one of the many basic, fundamental human rights. Nevertheless, this simple right is frequently violated in various areas where armed conflict is common. Children in different communities affected by conflict experience trauma, displacement and the failure of school facilities. Gender-based violence, childrens recruitment to the military and physical attacks on educational buildings are one of the further restrictions conflict affected areas experience as a limit to access to education. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), between the years 2020 and 2022 alone over 5,000 attacks against education were documented.

Armed conflicts impact on educational quality and safety

Conflicts not only degrade and hurt the standard and security of learning environments but also additionally it ,at times, completely affects the accessibility of education. Schools are often targeted because of their occasional usage for military purposes. Teachers can be murdered, kidnapped, tortured and displaced because of the fear of these possibilities. Many of them are too afraid to go on teaching, therefore they are left with a hard choice of either changing their occupations or their locations. Armed forces may alter curriculum to further their ideological

objectives. Additionally, kids' psychological stress might have a major impact on their capacity to study and succeed in school. As an example, since the civil war began in 2011, almost one-third of Syria's schools have been destroyed or severely damaged.

A school in Aleppo after bomb attacks.

Girls education in ongoing conflict regions

Conflict conditions disproportionately harm girls. Barriers and limits related to culture, traditions, finances and safety frequently keep girls from going to school and getting a proper educational background. Since 2021, girls that are older than sixth grade have been prohibited from attending and continuing school in Afghanistan under the ruling of Taliban. The 2014 kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls in Nigeria by Boko Haram brought more awareness to the intentional targeting and marginalizing of girls' education. The risk that prevent girls from completing their

education are further compounded by forced marriage, child marriages, sexual abuse, toxic home environments and household duties/responsibilities.

Refugees

Large-scale displacement usually comes as the result of conflict.Children who are refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs) encounter and experience many obstacles to their education such as, but not limited to, discrimination, racism, prejudice, xenophobia, limited resources, language barriers and a lack of legal status. According to UNHCR, only 37% of refugee children attend secondary school and only 6% have access to further education. The facilities and qualified educators, staff that needed to meet educational demands and standards are oftentimes lacking in camps and host countries/communities.

Despite many efforts from NGOs, refugee children often study in overcrowded, under-resourced environments.

International legal frameworks and SDG 4

By 2030, " ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" is the fourth Sustainable Development Goal. This objective becomes extremely difficult in war areas. The Safe Schools Declaration and the Fourth Geneva Convention place a strong emphasis on protecting education in times of armed conflict. Regardless, the effectiveness of these legislative tools depends on their implementation and observance. Countries vary greatly in terms of approval and operation.

Long-term consequences of miseducation

Long-term disruptions to education have serious repercussions. Young people without education are more vulnerable to radicalism, exploitation, and poverty. Reconstruction and long-term development are difficult in nations with persistent educational neglect. Furthermore, social and economic recovery are delayed when the workforce is lost. According to a World Bank evaluation, this generation may lose up to $17 trillion in lifetime earnings as a result of learning losses from COVID-19 and ongoing wars.

The Syrian Arab Republic

One of the worst education crises in recent history has resulted from the Syrian civil war, which has been going on since 2011. More than 2.4 million kids are not attending school. Access to education has been severely impacted by armed organizations' recruitment of minors, displacement, and targeted attacks on schools. Alternative learning pathways, such as community-based learning centers and psychosocial support programs, have been introduced by humanitarian organizations. Progress is still limited by ongoing conflict in spite of these efforts.

Conclusion of the background

Developing long-term solutions requires an understanding of the complex effects of violence on education. The complex connections between legal, social, economic, and political factors must be taken into account by delegates. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 in areas affected by war will need upgrading protective legal frameworks, prioritizing education in humanitarian responses, and guaranteeing fair access for disadvantaged people.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations educational,Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO has a main role and influence in promoting and establishing inclusive, quality education worldwide and also securing educational rights across the globe especially at times of crisis and conflict settings. UNESCO helps rebuild education systems and schools in post-conflict areas and also follows progress toward SDG 4 with various initiatives.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF provides support in education, curriculum adaptation, psychological support in emergencies for millions of children in conflict areas. It is a leader in this cause having initiatives like the "Learning for Peace" which provides education to conflict areas and has done strong, effective field work in countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan.

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

GCPEA works to prevent attacks that are made in schools on students and teachers in conflict areas. It also developed the "Safe School Declaration" which provides guidelines for protecting schools.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

ECW is the first ever global fund that is only dedicated to raising money to education in emergencies and crises. It not only provides immediate support but it also ensures its sustainable continuity and progression over 40 countries.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR ensures that refugee children have access the same as all of their other peers in camps and host countries. It has collaborations with both local governments and working NGO's.

Save The Children

Save the Children functions and collaborates actively in over 100 countries and is one of the biggest key providers of education in humanitarian crises. It establishes temporary learning centers, provides trained teachers to the area and also educates teachers.

European Union (EU)

The EU funds ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) and partners with ECW, UNICEF and various governments to show

support for refugee children in 3rd World Countries such as but not limited to; Middle east and Sub-Saharan Africa regions.

Norway and Argentina

A pivotal and effective change was made towards the protection of education with the co-launching of the "Safe Schools Declaration" in 2015 by Norway and Argentina. Norway's consistent funding to education initiatives and Argentina's outstanding regional efforts for school safety and acknowledging importance of education, proves both of the country's continued efforts of highlighting advocacy for a stronger education system for all.

Nigeria

One of the most affected countries by school attacks, especially the ones made by a self-proclaimed militant group called Boko Haram. The Chibok girls kidnapping in 2014 was a big symbol for the ongoing war on girls' education and their rights which led Nigeria to join the "Safe Schools Declaration".

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's education system was a one that came through a lot of progress and development throughout decades, which was unfortunately wasted with the recent rise of Taliban's takeover and oppression that forbids girls secondary and tertiary education. Despite international support, aid and funding Afghan girls remain a limited academic life.

Syria

After 14 years of civil war, destroying schools, displacing students and stopping all educational activities; organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children helped Syrian students continue with their life and education with non-formal teaching methods, trauma sensitive teaching and rehabilitation programmes in refugee camps.

Ukraine

After the Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine had mass destruction of schools. The government started a partnership with UNESCO, UNICEF and the EU launched distance learning programs.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Due to conflict, millions of Congolese children are out of school. Even though the government works with multiple foundations, children still suffer from the effects of the conflict on the loss of their educational rights.

Sudan

Due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, there were massive school closures, especially following the 2023 internal clashes. Sudan launched Education in Emergency Response Plans that includes and provides school meal programs and community-based education in war areas.

Yemen

Years of civil war have left over 2 million children out of school in Yemen with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF, INEE Yemen has developed emergency learning programs for students.

Timeline of Events

1948	**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
1977	**Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions which extended protections to schools in armed conflicts**
1989	**Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that secured the right of education for every child and gave them protection from military recruitments regardless of the conflict**
1990	**Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All that declared global commitment to universal education specifically including times of emergencies**

2000	Dakar Framework for Action that identified it as a key factor and a barrier to achieving education for all
2000	Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) got adopted and this set a target for primary education becoming universal but failed to put focus on conflict-affected areas
2002	The Launch of UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)
2004	Beslan School Siege in Russia, a terrorist attack that took place in a school, killing over 330 people.
2006	UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) Created
2007	INEE Minimum Standards Being Introduced with establishing global guidelines for safe education in emergencies
2010	The Haiti Earthquake response prioritized education for the first time during a natural disaster
2011	The Outbreak of The Syrian Civil War that led to millions of children losing access to education
2013	The Escalation of the Central African Republic Crisis, where armed forces destroyed majority of the schools
2014	Boko Haram Kidnapping 276 Chibok Girls

2015	The Adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 4
2015	Launching of safe Schools Declaration, calling on states to protect schools from military use and attacks
2016	The Establishment of Education Cannot Wait (ECW), becoming the first global initiative dedicated to supporting education in emergencies
2018	The Rohingya education crisis in Bangladesh exposed major barriers for refugee children
2019	The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) reported over 14.000 attacks on education in the last 5 years.
2020	The Covid-19 Pandemic closing schools worldwide
2021	The Taliban's return to reign in Afghanistan reversed years of prior progress by banning girls from attending higher education
2022	The Invasion of Ukraine by Russia
2023	The Sudanese Civil War, forcing school closures and intensifying the already existing education crisis
2024	The Education Cannot Wait Pledging Conference raising 850 million dollars

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/290- The Right to Education in Emergency Situations

Adopted on 9 July 2010, this resolution recognizes the right to education during emergencies and urges all of the Member States to ensure, provide access to education in all phases and times of crises, conflict also condemns attacks on all educational institutions.
Link; https://press.un.org/en/2010/ga10964.doc.htm

The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/275- International Day to Protect Education from Attack

Adopted on 28 May 2020, establishes 9th of September as the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, also highlights the importance and value of safeguarding learning environments in times of conflict/armed conflict.
Link;https://www.unesco.org/en/days/protect-education-attack#:~:text=To%20highlight%20the%20urgent%20need,to%20Protect%20Education%20from%20Attack.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1261- Children and Armed Conflict

Adopted on 25 August 1999, this resolution was the first to address and explain the impact of armed conflict on children, strongly condemning attacks on schools and calling for an increase in protection of children during war.

Link; https://press.un.org/en/1999/19990825.sc6716.html

The UN Security Council Resolution 1998-Children and Armed Conflict

Adopted on 12 July 2011, expands the criteria for including perpetrators on the Secretary-General's list to include those who attack schools and hospitals, stressing the need for accountability in violations as such.

Link; https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/706840?ln=en&v=pdf

The UN Security Council Resolution 2143-Children and Armed Conflict

Adopted on 7 March 2014, shows concern over the schools being associated with the military and urges all conflict parties to support the civilian nature of educational institutions under the international humanitarian law.

Link; https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2143(2014)

The UN Security Council Resolution 2225-Children and Armed Conflict

Adopted on 18 June 2015, reassures the international community's commitment to protect children in conflict zones and encourages practical, simple steps to prevent the military use of schools.

Link; https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2225(2015)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Adopted on 10 December 1948, Article 26 of the UDHR, states that everyone has the right to education, forming the foundational principle for international educational rights, including in times of conflict.

Link; https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Adopted on 20 November 1989, The CRC encourages every child's right to education and highly encourages states to ensure access to education and physical protection during armed conflict.

Link;https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

cThe Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols

Adopted on 12 August 1949, prohibits attacks on civilians and mandates special protection for children in times of armed conflict.

Link;https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentarieshttps://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries

The Safe Schools Declaration

Adopted on 28 May 2015, as a non-binding political commitment, urges states to protect schools from attacks and military use during times of armed conflict.

Link; https://ssd.protectingeducation.org/

The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030
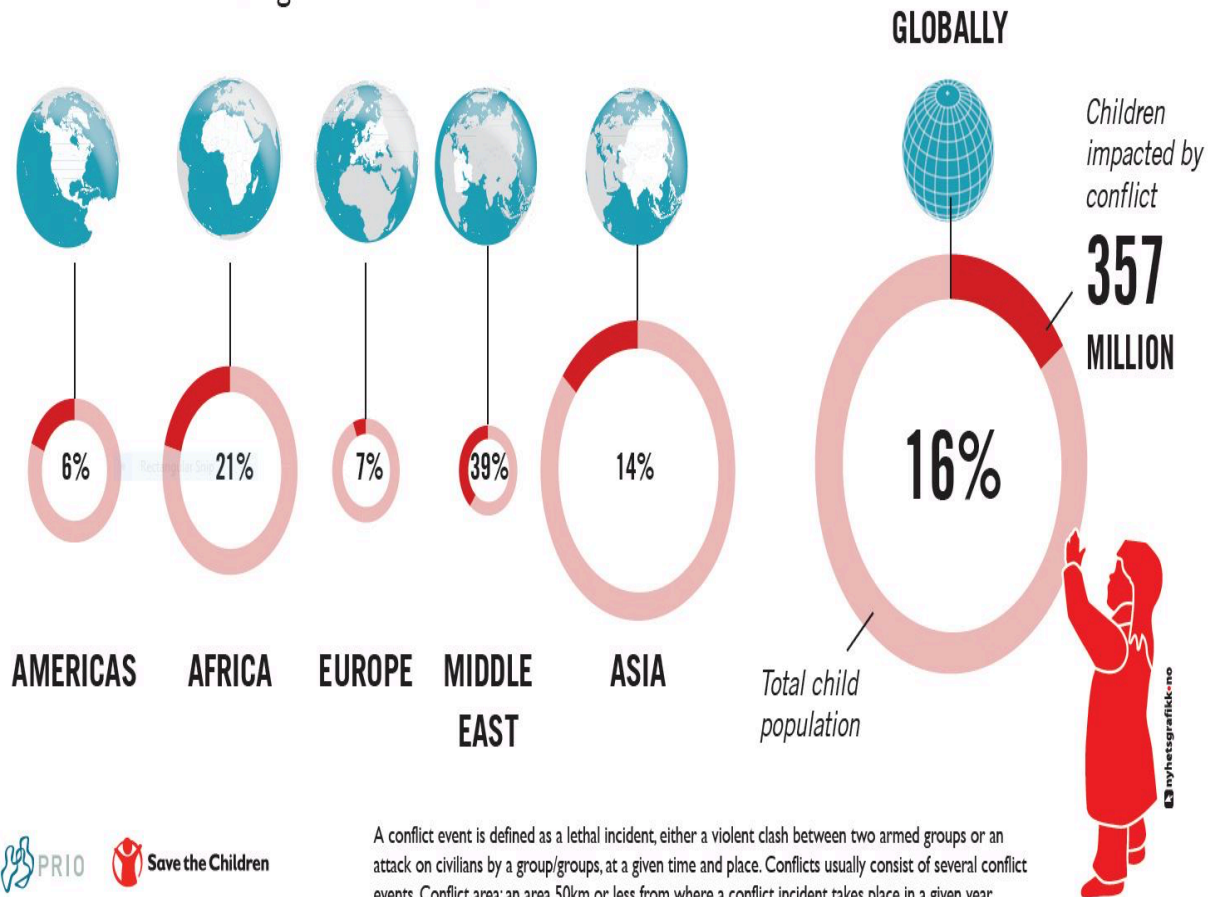
Adopted on 21 May 2015, commits governments and international partners to ensure inclusive and quality education for all.

Link; https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233813

Children affected by conflict

1 in 6 children were living in conflict areas in 2016

GLOBALLY

Children impacted by conflict

357 MILLION

6%

21%

7%

39%

14%

16%

AMERICAS   AFRICA   EUROPE   MIDDLE EAST   ASIA

Total child population

PRIO   Save the Children

A conflict event is defined as a lethal incident, either a violent clash between two armed groups or an attack on civilians by a group/groups, at a given time and place. Conflicts usually consist of several conflict events. Conflict area: an area 50km or less from where a conflict incident takes place in a given year.

Data source: PRIO/UCDP. For more information: www.savethechildren.net/waronchildren

This map shows the global amount of children living in conflict affected regions, highlighting locations where children's education is most at risk.
Link;https://blogs.prio.org/2018/02/new-mapping-of-children-affected-by-armed-conflict/

Figure 2: Half of all out-of school children and adolescents in conflict-affected countries are found in sub-Saharan Africa

Out-of-school children and adolescents by region, 2012 (millions)
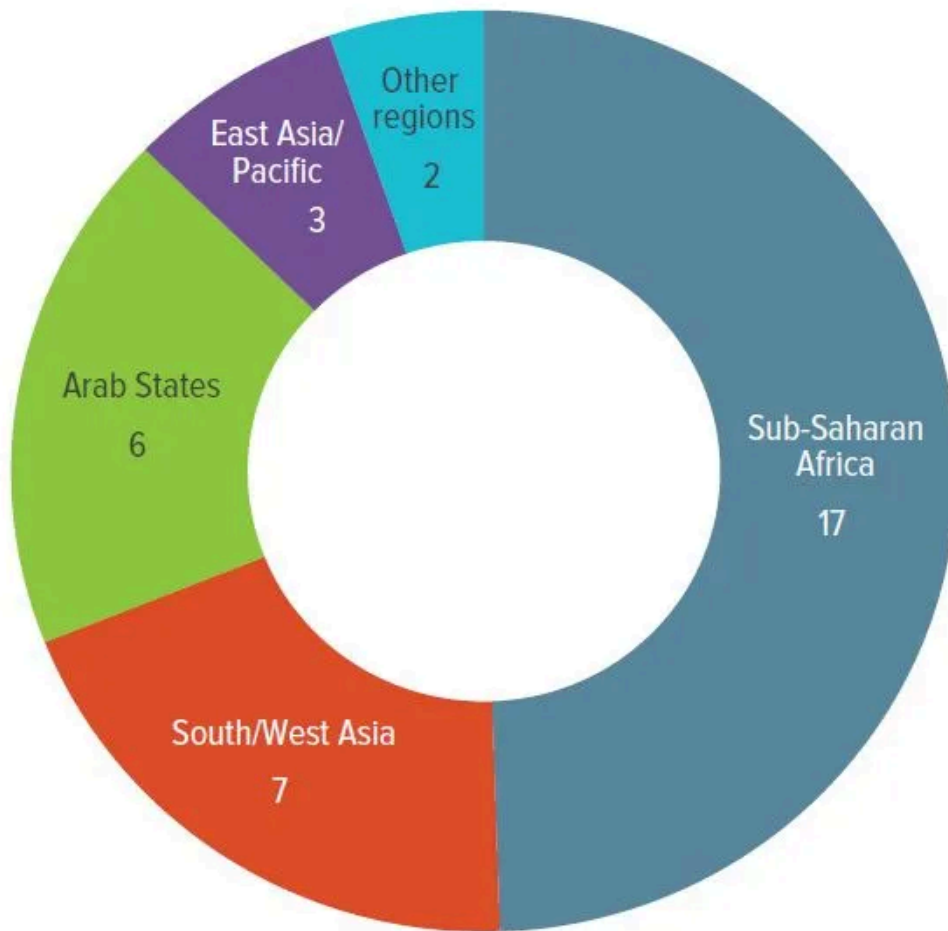
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

This map shows the distribution of out of school children and youth in conflict affected zones, highlighting the regions with the highest numbers.
Link;https://world-education-blog.org/2015/06/29/2-3-billion-needed-to-send-all-children-and-adolescents-to-school-in-war-zones/

Useful for understanding the global perspective of the issue, this map shows the ongoing conflicts around the world in detail and their impact on their education systems.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

Adopted in 2016, ECW is a global fund established by the UN to provide fast and long lasting education support in conflict zones.

The Safe Schools Declaration

Initiated in 2015 by Norway and Argentina, it is a political agreement approved by 118 Member States which urges governments to stop the military use of schools.

UNICEF's "Back to Learning" Programs

This program creates temporary learning places in countries like Yemen,Syria and South Sudan and aims to restore education.

UNESCO's Education in Emergencies (EİE) Strategy

Provides technical support and help to governments who are in a development crisis in conflict-affected regions.

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

An inter-agency alliance that keeps track and documents attacks on education who also promotes legal standards.

INEE Minimum Standards for Education

Published in 2004 by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, is a guiding framework for NGOs and UN agencies.

No Lost Generation (NLG) Initiative

Launched by UNICEF and UNHCR, it focuses on the importance of educational access and psychosocial support for children that are affected by the Syria and Iraq crisis.

EU's Education in Emergencies Policy

Devotes at least 10% of the EU's humanitarian aid to educational programs in conflict affected countries such as Lebanon, Ukraine and Sudan.

Possible Solutions

Solutions to Protect Schools in Conflict-Affected and Post Conflict Zones;

Supporting the establishment of emergency communication channels, applications or systems for teachers and students to both contact and communicate with each other in times of crisis and reporting threats or attacks on necessary facilities. The integration of the "Safe Schools Declaration" into both national and international legislation.

Solution to Achieve Funding

Securing partnerships with philanthropic organizations and wealthy individuals in the private sector to finance tools and teachers for alternative

education systems in crisi areas. Redirecting and using necessary portions of the national defense budgets toward rebuilding alternative education systems.

Solutions for Alternative Learning Strategies

Implementing mobile schools in regions lacking infrastructure. Supporting offline remote learning platforms that are accessible in multiple languages for students in displaced populations. Popularizing regional educational media content such as radio or podcast programming with the teaching of the necessary curriculum.

Solutions to Support and Help Educators

Investing in emergency training programs for teachers that include trauma-informed pedagogy, crisis management and multilingual communication. Encouraging on recognizing displaced and refugee teachers with temporary teaching certificates within host countries or camps.,

Solutions for Supporting Legal Aid

Including the importance of the protection of education in natural humanitarian response plans and peacekeeping mandates. Establishing monitoring systems to keep in track and report violations against the right to education.

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